near their silkworm breeding houses, but it is unfortunate that the new conditions in which the trees are placed should have an adverse effect on silk production. On the plateaus and in the high valleys, in the vicinity of land once occupied by villages, there are many mulberry trees which have continued to survive. They send out new leaves again even after the annual burnings of the forest clearings, and bear leaves which are vigorous and have a more pithy appearance than those of their fellows in the low, humid parts of the country. They are also said to be preferable for feeding silkworms (2).

(2) See Appendix XXIV.

Local consumption absorbs the greater part of the silk production, for the majority of Laotians, both men and women, use it in making the garments which they wear.

We do not possess exact data on the total production of silk in Laos. It has been estimated at about twenty tons annually. The price varies from 400 to 500 francs per hundred kilograms.

OPIUM POPPIES. The opium poppy is cultivated by the Yaos and the Meos, in northern Laos. Towards the end of the rainy season, [376] in September, the poppy seeds are sowed broadcast on land from which maize has just been harvested. Germination is activated by the last rains of the season and the plant flowers at the beginning of December. Harvesting is done shortly after the petals have fallen.

Closely spaced lengthwise incisions are made all along the surface of the capsule, allowing the plant juice to escape. It coagulates upon contact with the air and is collected daily until the plant has been completely exhausted (1).

(1) See Appendix XXV, report of M. Lussan, Cochinchina customs agent. The latter was sent on a mission to Upper Laos to experiment with growing opium poppies by less rudimentary methods than the ones in use among the Meos and the Yaos.

PAPER TREES. There are several trees in Laos whose bark is used to make paper. They seem to be of the mulberry type and are called "Kok-Sa."

The paper is made by hand on forms, by extremely rudimentary methods. Its manufacture occupies several villages of northern Laos.

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289 The amount of paper produced is hardly significant, and is limited to local needs.

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311 TEA. Tea is the most important crop of the Sib-Song-Pahn-Na and the Burmo-Shan States on both banks of the Mekong. The regions of production are included between 21° 30' and 22° 30' N. latitude and between 97° 30' and 99° 40' E. longitude.

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618 The greater part of these regions, that is to say those situated on the left bank of the Mekong, belonged to us by the terms of the 1887 Franco-Chinese treaty of Tien-Tsin. But because of our slowness to occupy these territories England inherited the rights of Upper Burma and ceded them to China, and finally only the two Muong-Hou remained in our possession.

563 Unfortunately, the small tea-growing region left to us is not only the least productive, but also the one in which tea-growing has degenerated and is no longer practiced except by the Khas.

[377] Yet the climate of the Muong-Hou is similar to that of Man-La, which is located thirty kilometers to the west and whose tea has the same reputation as those of I-Hou, I-Bang, Muong-Hing, Muong-Pang and Muong-Yang, all of which are known as "S'semao and Pou-Eurl Teas." Furthermore, the altitude and configuration of the soil, the nature of the terrain and the varieties of tea plants are all similar in our territory of Muong-Hou and in that of Man-La. But as a consequence of various circumstances and especially of a long interruption in cultivation between 1884 and 1893, most of the tea plants have not been pruned. They have reached a height of more than six meters and the tea which they produce is almost valueless (1).

(1) See Appendix XXVI.

The average production of the whole tea-growing region has been estimated at from 600 to 660 tons. This tea is exported to China, to Burma, to Laos, to Tonkin and to Siam. In 1891 and 1892 France imported a trial shipment of 6,000 kilograms, but the transaction was not repeated because of a rise in transport costs and customs duties which did not leave a large enough profit for the importer.

435 In the regions of production prices vary, depending on quality, between 75 and 150 francs per hundred kilograms.

The teas which come from this region meet with little approval in Europe, because they lack the various aromas which the Chinese

degree.

289 Paper. The manufacture of paper using the bark of a tree called "Kok-Sa" (1) is limited to a single region of northern Laos.

(1) See Chapter VII.

It is not of any great importance, since it does not even suffice for local consumption.

The manufacturing processes are those familiar to everyone as being used in China, in Japan, in Annamite lands and in Burma.

321 531 Wood and ivory carving. Here we no longer have to deal with an industry, but with an art. The men who practice it are few in number, are highly paid, work slowly and are generally inveterate opium smokers.

Like the goldsmiths and jewelers, the wood and ivory carvers of Laos reproduce, ad infinitum, immutable models which their predecessors have handed down. They are, however, able to execute motifs from any given design. To be sure, they are inferior to their Burmese, Annamite, Malay, Chinese and especially Japanese colleagues as regards the movement, harmony, purity of form and finish of their work.

532 Fresco painting. The pagodas of Laos, which have been left untended for many long years, contain curious fresco paintings set off with gold, but lack of care and exposure to the weather have partly destroyed them. This art has very few practitioners in Laos, and it should be added that most of the existing frescoes are mainly the work of Burmese, Cambodians and Chinese of whom the native artists are only the pupils.

396 [438] Pirogue carpenters. Nearly all the inhabitants who [464] live on the banks of the big river or its principal tributaries are able to carve out a pirogue. Certain villages, however, have a monopoly in this industry.

When it is a matter merely of hewing out a pirogue which is to be used only for crossing the river, fishing or agricultural service, everyone does a fairly good job. But for the large pirogues which are reserved for regattas, voyages and commercial transports, recourse must be had to specialists. Only they know how to give their products